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THE ARCHIVIST'S SEARCH FOR GRANT FUNDINGS

Timothy Walch

The search for foundations and funding sources for archival or manuscript projects can be frustrating and confusing. By one estimate, there are fifty thousand foundations and agencies in the United States providing funds for all manner of projects. As if to make matters worse, the wealth of information available on these foundations and agencies can easily overwhelm the uninitiated. How can anyone hope to sort out the agencies potentially interested in archives and manuscripts from such an enormous number of sources of funding? The search need not be a burden if archivists use common sense, carefully evaluate potential funding sources, and tap available grant information services and reference works.¹

Archivists should first be conscious of several factors that will affect their search. The single most important piece of information to acquire about any foundation or source of funding is its record of grants. Statements of purpose, philosophy, and objectives are important, but often vague--if not ambiguous--while recent lists of grants show clearly how foundations and funding agencies apply their philosophies. Moreover, such lists will give archivists a notion of whether or not their proposals will even be welcomed. A foundation or grant agency which makes awards only to universities for research on a specific disease would not be a good candidate to support an archival project--even in the history of science or medicine. Archivists should also keep in mind that very few foundations have ever reviewed or evaluated an archival grant proposal, and even fewer have funded archival projects. It is no surprise, therefore, that grant-seeking archivists spend a substantial amount of time evaluating the potential interest of foundations in their archival proposals.

Another factor for archivists to keep in mind is that large national foundations and grant agencies--whether public or private--are not necessarily the best, most convenient, or easiest sources of support for archival projects. "The grant candidate," notes expert Virginia White, "should not limit his search to the larger foundations but will find it worth the effort to explore possibilities among medium-sized or smaller sized foundations especially for individual grants or institutional grants for well-defined, modest-sized programs."² Archivists seeking grant support for a project that has clear-cut local appeal--a state or community history, for example--would do well to seek support from state or community foundations. Partial support from a local foundation will always make a project more appealing to a national foundation should additional funds be necessary.

Keeping these two factors in mind--the grant record and the orientation of the foundation--archivists can then turn their attention to the search for foundations likely to be interested in their specific projects. This essay will focus for the most part on the publications and services of the Foundation Center, a nonprofit, nonadvocacy organization which has gathered information on tens of thousands of foundations for nearly twenty-five years. Without a doubt, archivists should start their search for grant funding with this center.

Supported itself by many foundations, the Foundation Center provides many services free or at a nominal fee through two national libraries, two field offices, and more than ninety regional collections in fifty states. The libraries located in New York and Washington and the field offices in Cleveland and San Francisco dispense a variety of information in both hard copy and microform from foundation reports filed each year with the Internal Revenue Service. The libraries and field offices also have a great number of books and periodicals about philanthropy and grantmanship, allowing grant seekers to learn about the grantmaking process as well as about the foundations themselves. Access to information about particular foundations is facilitated by an automated system of research aids which also constitute the main

source of information for the center's printed materials. The regional collections, located at public and research libraries around the country, contain specific information on foundations in the appropriate state; the regional collections also contain copies of all the publications distributed by the Foundation Center.

The key to the many services provided by the Foundation Center are three overlapping automated data bases maintained in the center's two national libraries. These data bases store information on thousands of foundations and provide selective subject coverage of grants awarded. The availability of this information in machine-readable form allows the center to answer very specific questions quickly and with a certitude not possible using manual research. Output from each of these data bases is disseminated in annual editions of *The National Data Book*, *The Foundation Directory*, and *The Foundation Grants Index*, which represent the data base files "frozen" in print as of the date of publication. Copies of these publications are available in many public libraries as well as in the regional collections and field offices of the center.

The largest of the three data bases is the Foundation Center's National Data Base, which is the basis for *The National Data Book* and contains capsule information abstracted from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Because it includes information on the twenty-two thousand, most active private foundations in the United States, the center's National Data Base is the most complete of any available, giving public information on thousands of local foundations in specific states or regions and making the information particularly useful for applicants with projects of local or area interest. The data base includes foundation names, mailing addresses, principal officers, total amounts of grants paid, assets, expenditures, gifts received, IRS identification numbers, and the dates for the fiscal information.

Unfortunately, the Foundation Center's National Data Base does not provide information on grants made or subjects of interest to particular foundations. Grant seekers should use the center's National Data Base to gather general information on foundations in particular

states or locales, and then, with a list of candidates in hand, turn to the Internal Revenue Service Forms 990-AR and 990-PF filed by the target foundations. These forms list the contributions, gifts, and grants made. If the number of grants is small, the list may appear on page 4 of Form 990-AR. More common, however, is for foundations to attach separate schedules of grants to Form 990-PF. The IRS does not require foundations to state their specific interests, but grant seekers can read between the lines by examining the list of grants themselves.

Copies of all of these IRS forms (on aperture cards) are available in the Foundation Center's two national libraries; copies of IRS forms for foundations in individual states are also available in appropriate regional collections of the center. Copies of the forms arranged by state are also available for sale from the Internal Revenue Service, P.O. Box 187, Cornwell Heights, Pennsylvania 19020.

Archivists who carefully use this national data base in conjunction with appropriate IRS forms will be able to determine the likely interest of specific local foundations in all or part of an archival project. To be sure, using these tools will require intuition and hard work, but once the work is completed, it is likely that the archivist will have identified several potential sources of support. The emphasis on potential is important; it may take months or years of cultivation before a local foundation agrees to support an archival project, but without a doubt, this is the place to start.

The second of the center's three data bases is the Foundation Directory Data Base, which focuses on approximately three thousand American foundations with assets over \$1 million or annual grants totaling \$100 thousand or more. These foundations represent about 93 percent of foundation assets and 92 percent of grant dollars awarded each year. Such statistics tempt many grant seekers to focus exclusively on the major foundations; indeed, these foundations are inundated with unsolicited proposals each year and have learned to say no without so much as a glance at the project idea. Grant-seeking archivists should resist the temptation to

send their proposals to these institutions unless their project fits very clearly into the target foundation's recent pattern of funding.

The descriptive information in the Foundation Directory Data Base includes foundation name, address, telephone number, statement of purpose and activities, financial data, officers and trustees, grant application information, frequency of board meetings, and, more importantly, the subjects of philanthropic interest to the foundations. Thus, with relatively little effort, archivists can determine which of the larger foundations are interested in the humanities or in history-related projects. Unfortunately, neither *archives* nor *manuscript* is a subject heading, so archivists seeking support must still turn to the IRS forms.

The third of the center's data bases is the Foundation Grants Index Data Base, which includes information on more than four hundred of the largest foundations. Unlike the other two data bases, this one does provide subject access to the grants made by these foundations. In other words, it provides specific information on grants of \$5 thousand or more in all subject areas and serves as an excellent guide to the program interests of the largest American foundations. Data base records include descriptions of individual grants, amounts and dates authorized, limitations, recipient names and locations, foundation names and locations, and index terms. In using the subject index, archivists will necessarily have to search under several headings--most notably, *historical*, *history*, and *library*--to find archives and manuscript projects, but they can be found in this data base.

As noted earlier, much of the information in the center's three data bases is available in published form, and the center also provides a number of other publications which will be of value to archivists in search of benefactors. The most significant of these are the annual *Comsearch Printouts*, which are computer printouts in sixty-eight subject areas listing the grants made during the preceding calendar year by about 350 major foundations. The printouts are generated as computer searches of the three Foundation Center data bases and

serve as guides to the interests of large foundations in each category. Archives and manuscripts proposals are found under the subject headings *libraries*, *museums*, and *historical projects*. Available from the center in both microfiche and paper, *Comsearch Printouts* provide a handy guide to foundation-supported work in specific areas during specific years.

Also very useful--especially in locating regional sources of grant support--are state foundation directories. Many of these directories are updated annually and are based on information filed with the Internal Revenue Service or with appropriate state agencies. Frequently indexed by field of interest, these compilations allow archivists to identify quickly which local foundations will most likely be interested in archival projects. Once these foundations have been identified, grant seekers should write for copies of annual reports and any available procedural guidelines. Such reports and guidelines will provide the best indication of how welcome a proposal might be. A bibliography of state foundation directories is available from the Foundation Center.

In addition to publishing directories and catalogs of grant information, the Foundation Center also participates with an independent organization, the Council on Foundations, in the bimonthly publication of *Foundation News*. This valuable periodical includes up-to-date installments of *The Foundation Grants Index* as well as articles on all aspects of philanthropy. Subscription information is available from the Council on Foundations, 1828 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Two other publications available from the Foundation Center are also worth noting. Carol Kunzig's *Foundation Fundamentals: A Guide for Grant Seekers* is a practical, readable, comprehensive guidebook which focuses on how to begin the search for foundation funding. Among other topics, Kunzig discusses the implications of foundation size, how to identify foundations interested in a particular subject field or geographic area, and how to present proposal ideas to target foundations. Kunzig also provides worksheets, checklists, and a useful bibliography. The Foundation

Center's *Source Book Profiles* is a biannual subscription publication that focuses on foundations giving a total of more than \$200 thousand worth of grants per year. The profiles are three to five pages in length and include detailed factual breakdowns of each foundation's gifts by subject area, by grant type, and by grant recipient type. Additional analyses of patterns of giving are also provided. Both of these publications are worth close examination by archivists in search of foundation funding.

The Foundation Center's guides and directories are not definitive, of course. Archivists seeking information on federal government grant programs will want to return to two excellent guides published by government agencies. Both the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* and *Federal Programs for Libraries: A Directory* provide detailed information on the requirements of specific federal programs. Archivists will be pleased to find that agencies other than the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Historical Publication and Records Commission are giving grants for archives-related projects.

The *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* is updated twice a year and contains current information on all available federal grants and contracts. For each program, the catalog lists the full name of the program and agency, authorization, types of assistance, use and use restrictions, eligibility requirements, application and award process, assistance considerations, postassistance requirements, financial information, program accomplishments, regulations, guidelines and literature, related programs, examples of funded projects, and criteria for selecting proposals. In short, the catalog is the place to start a search for appropriate federal programs.³

A second government catalog with particular value for archivists and librarians is *Federal Programs for Libraries: A Directory* published by the Office of Libraries and Learning Resources of the U.S. Department of Education. The directory provides essential information on library and archival programs; much of the information was distilled from the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* and the publications of the American

Library Association's Washington Office. In addition to providing handy information on federal programs, the booklet also includes a helpful introduction and two very useful bibliographies on funding sources and grantsmanship.⁴

The archivist's search for grant funding--particularly nongovernment sources of support--has never been easy, and the task is likely to get even more difficult in the future. Recent cuts in federal funding for archives and manuscripts projects--and the likelihood of additional cuts in future fiscal years--will increase the competition for the shrinking grant dollars of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission and the Research Resources Program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Utilizing the data bases of the Foundation Center and directories on federal grant programs, however, the motivated archivist can make significant progress in identifying other potential sources of grant funding for archives and manuscripts projects.

NOTES

¹The publications reviewed in this essay are, for the most part, available from the Foundation Center, 888 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10106, telephone 800-424-9826. The prices on these publications range from \$4 to \$200, so archivists are encouraged to write or call for the current publications catalog before ordering. The publications reviewed are as follows: *The National Data Book*. 6th ed. 2 vols. New York, 1982; *The Foundation Directory*. 8th ed. New York, 1981; *The Foundation Grants Index*. 11th ed. New York, 1982; *Com-search Printouts*. New York, 1982; Carol Kunzig, *Foundation Fundamentals: A Guide for Grant Seekers*. rev. ed. New York, 1981; *Source Book Profiles*. 4 vols. New York, 1982.

In addition to these Foundation Center publications, archivists should consult the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance*, available on subscription from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C. 20402. A

final publication of note is *Federal Programs for Libraries: A Directory*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1980. This publication is available through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service, P.O. Box 190, Arlington, Virginia 22210. The order number is ED 14858 and the publication is available in two formats: microfiche (\$.91 plus postage) and hard copy (\$8.60 plus postage).

²Virginia P. White, *Grants: How to Find Out About Them and What to Do Next* (New York, 1975), 128. Archivists looking for additional guidance on grantsmanship would do well to read this book. White includes practical, useful advice on basic sources of information, government grants, foundation grants, the preapplication phase, preparing the application, and the grant award process.

³For order information, see footnote 1 .

⁴For order information, see footnote 2.